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C. S. Hinnant  
Senior Vice President and  
Chief Nuclear Officer

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Ms. Carol Hanlon  
S&ER Products Manager  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office  
P.O. Box 30307 M/S 025  
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0707

**Statement to Department of Energy  
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management  
On Yucca Mountain Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation**

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As Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham nears a decision on whether to recommend the Yucca Mountain, Nev., site for use as a federal spent nuclear fuel repository, Progress Energy Inc. (whose companies own and operate five nuclear reactors in the Carolinas and Florida) offers the following comments in support of such recommendation:

- The Department of Energy has spent nearly 20 years and more than \$6.7 billion studying the issue, and has focused exclusively on Yucca Mountain over the last 14 years. In studying the site's hydrology, geology and seismology – research that has been continually peer-reviewed – scientists have found no evidence that would disqualify Yucca Mountain as a site for a permanent repository for the nation's spent nuclear fuel.
- Storing high-level radioactive waste at one location is preferable to continuing to accumulate spent fuel at more than 70 sites around the country. Earlier reports from the National Academy of Sciences, as well as DOE's own draft environmental impact statement, have indicated that development of a central repository is the safest and most economical way to dispose of used fuel rods from commercial nuclear power plants.
- The Yucca Mountain facility would be designed with a combination of engineered and natural barriers to protect the environment. It also would have specially engineered containers for holding high-level radioactive waste materials. Likewise, casks used for transportation are designed and built to withstand tremendous destructive forces. In fact, in more than three decades of transporting spent fuel rods, the nuclear industry has an outstanding safety record.

P.O. Box 1551  
Raleigh, NC 27602

T > 919.546.4222  
F > 919.546.2405

Ms. Carol Hanlon

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- Since 1982, consumers have paid more than \$16 billion to the Nuclear Waste Fund to pay for a federal repository. Despite that investment, the DOE is now almost four years late in meeting its mandated obligation to take waste from the nation's commercial nuclear reactors.
- The lack of a federal repository has left the operators of nuclear plants around the country – including Progress Energy's utility companies Carolina Power & Light and Florida Power Corp. – with no option but to develop interim plans for increased storage of spent nuclear fuel.
- Continued, politically prompted delay in this process will significantly impair the ability of the U.S. nuclear industry to fulfill its mission in meeting the growing energy demands of the American people in an environmentally friendly fashion.

We strongly urge Energy Secretary Abraham to move the issue forward as soon as possible by making a positive recommendation to President George Bush on the suitability of the Yucca Mountain site for use as a national high-level radioactive waste repository.

Please include the preceding statements as part of the official review record. Thank you.

Sincerely,

